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UNCLAS PRETORIA 000660

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR OES/ENV/JOHN THOMPSON AND AF/S

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MERCURY ISSUE AT UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL: SOUTH AFRICA AGREES

REF: State 18970

1. Mr. Zaheer Fakir, the Head of International Liaison and Coordination in the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), confirmed to ES&T Assistant that the South African Government (SAG) agreed with the United States' proposed approach to address mercury pollution, which will be presented at the 23RD United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) Governing Council (GC) meeting in Nairobi Feb 21-25. The SAG delegation has also agreed to meet with their U.S. counterparts in Nairobi.

2. Fakir also said that DEAT's technical team observed that the issue of developing mercury inventory capabilities was not noted in the U.S. GC proposal. He said they would appreciate it if the matter is looked into because SAG regards mercury inventories development capacity as important since most developing nations still do not have the capacity to do so. The team also observed a gap in the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), which deal with the legality of mercury pollution. SAG would propose for an appropriate legal instrument to be looked for within the existing MEAs.

3. According to Fakir, Environment Affairs Minister Marthinus Van Schalkwyk will lead the delegation to Nairobi. Although other delegates may be added to the list at a later stage, Mr. Fakir confirmed that the following would attend:

Ms. Bridgette Mabudafhasi, Deputy Minister of DEAT;
Mr. Alf Wills, Deputy Director General, International Cooperation; and
Mr. Zaheer Fakir, Head of International Liaison and Cooperation.
FRAZER